



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

Vol. 10, No. 3 March, 1976

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The NEWS, published 11 times per year, is sent to all NARP members; minimum membership is \$10 per year.

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RETURN REQUESTED

Amtrak Operating Budget Debated

Amtrak remains in the dark about what its map will look like at year's end. The Administration's latest tactic is to claim that all but a few "useless" routes could be preserved under its \$378 million budget. But DOT will not name the "bad" routes and seems determined to make Amtrak, using the criteria now in effect (February News), take all the heat for discontinuing particular routes — or for failing to start the Washington-Denver experimental route already designated.

For over two months, Secretary Coleman failed to answer a letter in which Amtrak's President Reistrup asked if DOT wished him to proceed with that experimental route in light of the 29% increase in the projected annual net cost (now set at \$4.872 million). Then, after the criteria became effective March 19, DOT told the world that the Denver decision was up to the Amtrak Board.

On March 24, Federal Railroad Administrator Asaph H. Hall

told a Senate Appropriations subcommittee, "We are confident" that Amtrak would not be forced "to make massive cuts in their system of routes and services".

FRA's "confidence" was supported by very shaky

"I disagree totally with the cut in Amtrak's funds proposed by the President's budget. I believe an adequate rail passenger system is vital to this country, now and in the future. If necessary, I will propose an amendment on the Floor of the Senate to restore full funding for Amtrak."

—Senator Robert Taft, Jr. (R-Ohio)

generalizations about economies it claims Amtrak could make which FRA claims are not reflected in Amtrak's estimates. For example, FRA noted a 1975 Amtrak study which "projected

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Amtrak Set to Acquire N.E. Corridor

Though some uncertainty remained, it appeared that Amtrak would take title to the Boston-New York-Washington mainline (though not the Harrisburg and Springfield "branches") on April 1, the same day that Consolidated Rail Corporation (ConRail) was to commence operations over properties of the bankrupt Northeast railroads, excluding the Boston and Maine.

The Administration prevented Amtrak from acquiring the

REISTRUP BARRED FROM BOARD

More than three months after Roger Lewis resigned from the Amtrak Board of Directors, the Administration has not moved to fill the vacancy. NARP has learned that Under-Secretary John Barnum, who earlier promised the seat to Amtrak President Paul Reistrup, is now blocking his nomination. Barnum recently told Senator Hartke's Commerce Subcommittee on Surface Transportation that the Administration had no immediate plans to fill the slot.

missing 12 miles east of Albany which hampers Boston-Albany operations, as well as an important stretch of the old passenger mainline through Schenectady whose absence needlessly slows all passenger trains running west of Albany. The State of New York could acquire these lines with 100% Federal funding, and deficiency judgment protection, during ConRail's first year of operation, and we encourage NARP members in New York to write to the Governor and their state legislators in support of

such a state action.

New York's failure to act would prevent realization of the full advantages of track improvements elsewhere between New York and Buffalo and of the speedy turboliners Amtrak will bring to the line later this year.

It appeared that the State of Michigan would acquire portions of the Chicago-Detroit passenger mainline not needed by ConRail, including some trackage in Indiana.

Because the Administration blocked funding with which Amtrak could have purchased the Boston-Washington line outright, Amtrak apparently will pay for it over an eight-year period during which ConRail payments to Amtrak for freight privileges on the Corridor will be reduced by appropriate amounts. At presstime, the Administration, which opposes Amtrak acquisition of the Corridor, was trying to block the ConRail/Amtrak deal, claiming it to be illegal.

Congress is expected to approve a supplemental appropriation bill containing \$50 million for Northeast Corridor capital improvements, but this money will be controlled by Secretary Coleman, and it is not known whether he will continue to maintain the view that 1976 is to be a year of all study and no action.

Finally, the Office of Management and the Budget appears unwilling to release loan guarantee money provided under the new railroad law for railroads outside the Northeast Corridor. Section 517 permits use of up to \$200 million to improve intercity passenger service, but it appears that all projects funded under this section will be chosen and justified primarily in terms of freight benefits.

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Amtrak Budget Debated *(continued from page 1)*

savings of up to \$42 million by Fiscal Year 1978 as a result of its takeover of maintenance facilities". But Amtrak took over major facilities (such as Penn Central's Chicago coach yard and locomotive shop) after that report was written and found conditions much worse than anticipated. Thus the savings will be

"...transportation policy in the United States has for some time discriminated against the continuance of rail passenger service, and the decades of neglect are frequently difficult to fully rectify in the short time since Congress created Amtrak. Regardless of past policies that discouraged use of passenger trains, there is no excuse for many of the deficiencies that some passengers still experience today."

**—Senator Vance Hartke (Ind.),
Chairman of the Surface Transportation Subcommittee
of the Committee on Commerce**

further into the future than had been hoped.

There is also confusion over the comparison between dollar figures for this and the next Fiscal Year. One Congressman wrote to a NARP member that "President Ford suggested an increase in the federal subsidy of Amtrak by \$122 million to \$462 million. . . The increased funding recommendation is intended to reflect increased, rather than decreased, Administration concern with the condition of our vital transportation systems."

This is an "apples-and-oranges" comparison, since \$350 million in FY '76 was only the operating grant, whereas \$462 million for FY '77 would include much more, since the President's budget request is only \$378 million for operating expenses.

The \$633.7 million which Amtrak says it needs in FY '77 to avoid discontinuances includes: \$105.7 million for capital expenses; \$68 million for increased costs associated with the Northeast Corridor under reorganization (Penn Central claims it loses \$50 million/year currently, and the additional \$18 million is to cover an adequate maintenance program); and \$460 million for operations nationwide (up \$20 million from our report last month, reflecting interest charges resulting from the Administration's refusal to let Amtrak use capital funds to pay off its loans). A major portion (\$31 million) of the increase in nationwide operating costs results from the fact that equipment maintenance previously charged under accepted accounting rules to the capital budget will now be charged to operations, where this will be the second go-around for older cars.

The crucial discrepancy with the President's budget is regarding nationwide operations, for which the President allows \$82 million less. However, the capital budget is \$189.3 million less than that included in Amtrak's Five Year Program (October News) and President Reistrup describes it as "minimal". If held at that level, it would include \$49.7 million for passenger cars and \$10 million for motive power (including conversion from steam to electric heat), \$45 million to improve maintenance locations taken over by Amtrak and for "minimum station improvements", and \$1 million for "spot right-of-way

improvements".

Fortunately, March 15 reports by House and Senate authorizing committees to their respective Budget Committees included the funds Amtrak says it needs to continue the

"... I am pleased with the progress you helped Amtrak make last year in improving our railroad. Let me assure you, though, that I am not satisfied with our current level of service. . . As I travel our railroad it is apparent that our consistency of service is all too erratic — a great ride on one train but a poor ride on another, or a good ride on a particular train and poor ride on that very same train the next trip out. . . One of our key goals, therefore, in the coming year will be to marshal all the know-how of our management staff towards the goal of consistency of service."

**—Amtrak President Paul H. Reistrup,
"to all management personnel" in letter
accompanying the 1975 Annual Report**

nationwide system. But this does not assure that the other key committees involved will concur: the Budget committees, chaired by Sen. Edmund Muskie (Me.) and Rep. Brock Adams (Wash.); and the Appropriations committees, chaired by Sen. John McClellan (Ark.) and Rep. George Mahon (Texas). (Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee chairmen are Sen. Birch Bayh (Ind.) and Rep. John McFall (Cal.).)

NARP members who have not done so are encouraged to write to their own Senators and Congressmen, urging them to support and work for approval of the full Amtrak request of \$633.7 million for Fiscal 1977. Particularly energetic letter-writers might also write to the chairmen listed above or send to them, copies of the letters to their own legislators.

Nationwide Editorial Support For Rail Passenger Service

Some editorial reactions from around the country to Ford's Amtrak budget proposal:

"(The cut) strikes us as shortsighted. Amtrak. . . can't be expected to have revived in five years a service dealt mortal blows over three decades by railroad neglect and the advent of plane and car travel."

—St. Petersburg Times

"Rep. Boland warned that Congress is in 'a conservative mood' this year, which will make it more difficult to increase the Amtrak appropriation. . . Amtrak is in serious trouble. . . But, we share Rep. Boland's view that. . . Congress will have the vision to see that the rail corporation needs all the financial help it can get."

—Springfield, Mass., News

"Rail (passenger) service. . . is a resource which we should not squander on the altar of short-term economy. . . We. . . should build on the small success we already have, rather than turn back and repeat past mistakes."

**—Daily Hampshire Gazette
(Northampton, Mass.)**

"It's hard to believe. The federal government is even more efficient at killing rail passenger service than was Southern Pacific. . . Five years of starvation followed by emasculation doesn't make sense."

—Salem, Oregon, Capital Journal

"With the energy crunch pointing to a greater reliance on rail passenger service, the nation blindly continues to dismantle its trains."

—St. Louis Globe-Democrat

FARES AND SERVICES

INTERCITY: Effective April 1, passengers riding between any points on the NY-Buffalo line can enjoy 25% discounts on 30-day round-trip tickets good except on trips starting between noon and 6 PM on Fridays, Sundays, and April 15, May 31, July 5, and September 6. Children ages 2 through 11 may ride half-fare. This plan replaces weekend excursion fares previously in effect.

Amtrak, which earlier included this route neither on lists of routes which would be discontinued nor saved under the President's budget, has made it clear that the line *would* be saved, so Albany and Buffalo should be deleted from the list of cities in our January lead article.

June 15 is the tentative startup date for a new Amtrak 403(b) Los Angeles-San Diego train, half of whose costs are to be paid by the Counties of Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego. The southbound trip would leave Los Angeles at 2:25 PM and the return would leave San Diego at 6:40 PM. (There are already three daily "basic system" round-trips on the line.)

Another planned LA-San Diego train, geared to daily Los Angeles commuters, with the local share of costs paid by LA County, is in limbo. Although Amtrak regularly carries hundreds of daily commuters in the East, Santa Fe doesn't think this practice should be extended to the West. Amtrak may take the railroad to court.

At presstime, continuation of Minneapolis-Superior service beyond March 31 was in doubt. State legislation providing the local share of funding forbid the payment of incentives, but Amtrak, since it must pay incentives to the railroad under its present contract with Burlington Northern, would not agree to

TOO MANY CARROTS

During 1975, Amtrak paid railroads with "penalty/incentive contracts" \$18.6 million, and penalized them \$166,145. A March 22 Washington Post story began: "Amtrak is paying millions of dollars in 'incentive' payments. . . in exchange for on-time performance standards that are not as tough as existed before the agreements were signed." Amtrak says it agrees with the ICC criticism that excessively high incentive payments are being made, and plans to improve the agreements to its own advantage in the next round of negotiations.

The first such contracts, with Milwaukee Road and Burlington Northern, expire July 1.

such a restriction, and the state legislature was about to adjourn until the fall. Loss of the train would be especially ironic at this time, just before the train is to start handling mail, and just after Congress, in the new rail bill, cut the local share of Amtrak 403(b) routes from 2/3 to 1/2 of the net cost of service.

Palatka, Fla., will be served by Amtrak's NY-St. Petersburg "Champion" effective April 25.

Amtrak is seriously considering eliminating through operation of "Southern Crescent" cars which run NY-Atlanta-Birmingham-New Orleans, to points north of Washington. The cars now run to and from New York, but have had a poor on-time record southbound because the Amtrak train originates in Boston and is frequently late leaving New York. Northbound, Southern timetable-padding and excessive Washington switching time cause the schedule to show 90 minutes from Alexandria to Washington departures, though the stations are only 8.2 miles apart. This, combined with Southern's lack of promotion, has undoubtedly played a major role in reducing through ridership to the point where the above-mentioned proposal is taken seriously.

In conjunction with this proposal, Amtrak would "Amfleet" the connecting Corridor trains (9:05 AM from Washington, 10 AM from Boston). No doubt the new equipment is justified on these exceptionally popular schedules, but we hope Amtrak will consider running an additional New York-Washington conventional train for the Southern cars, as it does now during

the holidays and on other days when required by late-running trains or high patronage.

Budget problems? The extra train could also handle local Corridor traffic. Northbound, with Southern cooperation, it could be moved up to the 8:05 AM slot and, with the diner running through, become a very popular train. Amtrak also might rethink and reallocate the funds involved in running three conventional trains from Philadelphia to Harrisburg in a 29-minute period.

Ending through equipment could well be another step on the road to discontinuing Atlanta service completely, or to making the revival of the route an even more expensive and difficult task when Amtrak took it over at some future time.

COMMUTER: ICC denied Milwaukee Road's application to discontinue the Chicago-Walworth, Wisc. run above Solon Mills, Ill. The service is therefore assured at least through February 25, 1977.

Amtrak and commuter train passengers who use Washington Union Station benefited when Washington's Metrorail system began handling revenue passengers on March 29. During Phase I, the 4.6-mile segment linking Union Station with the downtown business area and with a park-and-ride facility at Rhode Island Ave., N.E., operates Monday through Friday from 6 AM to 8 PM. Since the commuter trains were jammed even before Metro opened, it is to be hoped that Maryland's longstanding application for Federal funds to improve the service will be approved soon. The application has been held up by an apparent conflict between railroad union insistence that certain refurbishment work be done in railroad shops, and a Maryland law which requires competitive bidding on state-funded work.

Southern Dead and Chessie Doubtful in NE Reorganization

Despite valiant last-ditch efforts by Secretary Coleman to bring the parties together, failure of certain labor unions to come to terms with Southern and Chessie appears to have doomed longstanding plans for those carriers to participate in the Northeast reorganization. The *Washington Post*, under the headline, "A Union's Public-Be-Damned Attitude", reported that acquisition by Southern of the Delmarva line up to Wilmington, Del., and the Cape Charles barge connection was killed because leaders of the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks "representing 55 workers wanted work conditions of the bankrupt Penn Central forever applied to those 55" even though "informed sources said a majority of the workers involved wanted the agreement signed and were willing to work under conditions of their union's existing and future contracts with Southern."

At presstime, Coleman-inspired negotiations between Chessie and the unions were continuing, but with less optimism in light of the collapse of the Southern talks. Delaware and Hudson stood ready to acquire trackage rights over ConRail to Newark, Buffalo, and Washington, if the Chessie talks failed.

These developments suggest that more public money will be needed for track upgrading. Coleman said that Chessie had "committed itself to investing between \$500 and \$800 million of its own money" improving and upgrading former bankrupt properties; this of course would not happen if the talks fail. Southern had planned to spend \$30 million on the entire Delmarva operation, but it now appears that the Virginia portion will be abandoned April 1, with ConRail and Maryland supporting the surviving deadend line.

This is bad news for passenger service as well. Last year, NARP urged assignment of the whole Delmarva to ConRail and diversion to it of some through north-south freight traffic. This would have relieved freight congestion on the south end of the Northeast Corridor, and facilitated inauguration of Washington-area commuter and Washington-Richmond high-speed passenger services.

State Associations Aid NARP's Cause

Thomas R. Pulsifer was elected in February as the new President of the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers. OARP's mailing address is P.O. Box 653, Xenia 45385. Other state and regional associations are listed below, alphabetically by state; please send corrections and additions to NARP.

Citizens for Rail California, Northern Chapter: Chris Hoskins, Coordinator, P.O. Box 1079, Berkeley 94701; Southern Chapter: P.O. Box 99782, San Diego 92104;

Colorado Railroad Passengers Association, Dr. Jerome Alpiner, President, 6962 South Jackson Way, Littleton 80122;

Florida ARP, Walter Diem, President, 3808 Wisteria St., Sarasota 33581;

Georgia ARP, Henry DiVenuto, 2918 Houston St., Macon 31206;

Des Plaines Valley Improvement Association, Bruce Cheadle, 920 State St., Lockport, Ill. 60441;

OTA STUDY AVAILABLE

The Office of Technology Assessment's study: A Review of National Issues," has been completed for the Senate Commerce Committee. A copy may be obtained by writing to the Committee, Room 5202 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510.

Iowa-Nebraska ARP, Charles McKee, RR No. 3, Box 140, Des Moines 50321;

Maine Mid-Coast Rail Association, William Hennessey, Box 235, Georgetown 04548;

Michigan ARP, John DeLora, Chairman, Box 6901, Grosse Point 48236;

Minnesota ARP (MINNARPA), Howard J. Davy, 2710 Monterey Ave. So., Minneapolis 55416;

New Hampshire ARP, Dwight O. Sargent, Chairman, P.O. Box 851, Hanover 03755;

N.Y. State Transportation Council, Lettie Gay Carson, Millerton 12546;

Northeast Corridor Rail Action, Barbara Hollerith, P.O. Box 226, Old Greenwich, Ct. 06870;

MAIL TROUBLES

The December issue was mailed on the 24th of that month, but received by a Sacramento member on March 3. The February issue, mailed Feb. 27, reached a Milwaukee member on March 18.

Henceforth, our masthead will indicate the day the previous newsletter was given to the post office. We would appreciate being notified of unreasonably late deliveries.

Northeast Transportation Coalition, James M.S. Ullman, P.O. Box 666, Meriden, Ct. 06450;

Delaware Valley ARP, Harry Hyde, Jr., P.O. Box 429, Bryn Mawr, Pa. 19010;

Rhode Island ARP, Marjorie Zeuch, 286 Thayer St., Providence 02903;

Texas ARP, Alfred Ehm, 170 Carousel Drive, San Antonio 78227;

Vermont ARP, Ronald Butterfield, Chairman, Brandon 05733;

Washington ARP (WASHARP), Casper R. Curjel, 2217 East Newton, Seattle 98112, and Paul H. Phillips, West 444 — 21st, Spokane 99203.

In addition, Steven T. Evans, 2124 Sound View Drive, Gautier, Miss. 39553, has published Vol. 1 No. 1, of a newsletter, "Track 4", and is interested in bringing together the "ARP" forces of the Southeast, particularly to work for restoring New Orleans-Jacksonville service.

STATE AND LOCAL FUNDS SHOW STRONG SUPPORT FOR AMTRAK

Nationwide support for Amtrak is not confined to NARP members writing their legislators, or people answering pollsters' questions; it includes substantial amounts of state and local money helping to improve stations and track, as well as to operate some trains.

New York State will contribute at least \$975,000 (compared with Amtrak's \$325,000) in a program to renovate and construct stations in nine communities. Michigan has embarked on a state program to improve five existing facilities to serve the increasing number of rail passengers in that state. Both states have also paid for some track improvements.

Illinois is paying approximately 2/3 of the costs of refurbishing 22 stations in all parts of the state.

Ogden, Utah, has taken a 99-year lease on its joint SP-UP station. The building will be converted to a "working museum of railroad history" and will continue to serve the needs of Amtrak passengers and the lessor railroads.

In addition to \$2.3 million from the Federal government, station improvements of Boston, Providence, Baltimore, and Philadelphia 30th Street have been supported by state and local shares of Federal renewal funds, by funds from the 1974 Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, and from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The renovations range from the repair of malfunctioning doors at 30th Street to extensive rebuilding of Boston's South Station. At least 200 persons and area residents are now employed in the program.

Conversion of existing stations to serve bus and local transit passengers is gaining in popularity. This is the focus of the \$3 million renovation planned for Kalamazoo, Michigan. The 1887 station will be the hub of rail, bus, taxi, and limousine service for southwest Michigan.

California will pay for a new station in Richmond which will provide a direct transfer with San Francisco's BART rail system.

Sacramento has recently announced plans to convert its classic Southern Pacific station to a multi-use Regional Transportation Center. The station is located in an area of civic and governmental activities in the California capital and would be the terminus for high-speed trains to San Francisco currently under study. State and local funding will play an important part in this forthcoming project.

Dallas has committed a total of \$8.3 million from bond issues to

"...Auto-Train has a big asset in its operations — the train crew. . .The crew's attitude is such that the passenger feels he is doing them a favor by his mere presence, so he must be treated as an honored guest . . .This is a big advantage that Auto-Train has over Amtrak. . .Although Amtrak has many individuals who are as good as Auto-Train's (and the Amtrak General Rules of Conduct for On Board Personnel specify top-notch performance), there are many on-board people at Amtrak who are lousy."

—Peter Bretz, Rail Travel News

support rail passenger service through a multi-modal transportation center. The station is to become part of an extensive hotel, shopping, and office complex that will bring together federal, state, local and private financing. Hopefully, Dallas will receive better service to attract more people to its reborn landmark. Rerouting of existing "Lone Star" and "Inter-American" service to run straight south from Dallas would mean a vast improvement; both trains could still serve Fort Worth.

There are many other examples of state and local funds going to help improve Amtrak facilities. Perhaps Secretary Coleman will ponder their significance before deciding how hard to push his Amtrak budget cuts.